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### SOME THOUGHTS ON D. D. HOME.<sup>1</sup>

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It is not by any means the aim of the present paper to prove either that the so-called physical phenomena of spiritualism do not exist at all or that D. D. Home had no genuine mediumistic power. Such an aim would be far too ambitious ; besides, such is not precisely my view. My object is different. It has often been alleged that there is no evidence that Home—that bulwark, that alpha and omega of physical spiritualism with whom modern spiritualism must stand or fall, to use Mr. Podmore's words—was ever detected in fraud. I will attempt to show that this supposed immunity from detection is a fiction and that evidence to the contrary undoubtedly exists ; I will also insist on some elements of weakness—very serious elements—inherent in my opinion in the Home evidence. My conclusion had better be stated at the outset : the great bulk of D. D. Home's phenomena must be thrown overboard. A certain residuum, not easily explicable, will remain. But though I have no ready explanation to offer with regard to it, it seems to me, I confess, somewhat vitiated by its association with so many other "manifestations" which can be accounted for with so little difficulty, and whose explanation lies, as a matter of fact, on the surface.

I will begin by referring the reader to my paper in the *Journal* for July 1912 (xv. 274-288) entitled : "On the alleged Exposure of D. D. Home in France," in which I reproduced two letters by a Dr. Barthez, physician to Napoleon III's son—the Prince Imperial—dated respectively Biarritz, 5th September and 25th September, 1857, and printed in the *Revue de Paris* (1912, pp. 80-84). Dr. Barthez's

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read at a *Conversazione* (for Members and Associates only) on 6th November, 1929.

letters have since appeared in book form.<sup>1</sup> In the second of these two letters the following passage occurs: "It will amuse you to learn that we have at last grasped one of the methods by which Mr. Hume evokes spirits. As a result the Empress is reduced to saying that the Hume of to-day is no longer the Hume that he was, that he has lost his power, and that he tries to replace it by trickery. The thing is very simple. Mr. Hume wears thin shoes, easy to take off and put on; he also has, I believe, cut socks which leave the toes free. At the appropriate moment he takes off one of his shoes and with his foot pulls a dress here, a dress there, rings a bell, knocks one way and another, and, the thing done, quickly puts his shoe on again. This has been seen by M. Morio,<sup>2</sup> who has made of it a fine record, written and signed, with all the details necessary to establish the authenticity of his discovery. Hume saw that his secret had been guessed and I assure you that he cut a pitiful figure . . . The sittings for the evocation of spirits at once ceased at the castle and we hope that this undeserving character is put out of currency. Nevertheless Her Majesty is unable to accept the fact that anybody should have had the impertinence to make a mockery to such a point, and during a whole year, of herself and of the Emperor."<sup>3</sup>

In Dr. Barthez's letter we had at last in a concrete and authentic form an extremely vivacious legend connected with D. D. Home's name which had hitherto obstinately refused to "materialise," though cropping up again and again. Hence the very great importance of this document.

In my above-named paper I arrived *inter alia* at the following conclusions:

"(1) The famous legend as to the French exposure of Home has at last been 'hunted down.' It resolves itself into a real incident which happened in the course of Home's sittings at Biarritz about 20th September, 1857, and which, there is good reason to believe, consisted of an attempt at trickery on Home's part. . . ."

"(2) The sort of trickery used was precisely of a kind suggested to an attentive reader by a certain category of Home's performances. . . ."

"On the whole, a fairly good instance, I think, of the partial truth of the saying: '*Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu.*'"<sup>4</sup>

It has been objected<sup>5</sup> *à propos* of a few words I said about Home

<sup>1</sup> *La famille Impériale à St Cloud et à Biarritz* (Paris, no date).

<sup>2</sup> Baron Morio de l'Isle, "Prefect of the Palace," whose name also appears in the same connection in Comte Fleury and L. Sonolet's *La Société du Second Empire*, 1851-1858, pp. 185-186. This coincidence is very significant since the latter work has nothing to do with the Barthez letter.

<sup>3</sup> [The French text is printed in *Journal*, xv. 281, and in the Appendix to the present paper. *Hon. Ed.*]

<sup>4</sup> *Journal*, xv. 288. <sup>5</sup> Miss Dallas in *Journal* (January 1929), xxv. 17.

and the Biarritz exposure in the *Journal* for November 1928 (xxiv. 370 n.) that according to a statement of the late Sir William Crookes's he never detected any trickery or deceit whatever on Home's part, "nor heard any first hand evidence of such from other persons."<sup>1</sup> Well, the last few words would rather imply in my opinion that the great scientist probably was acquainted with *second-hand* evidence bearing on the subject; at any rate, there is in the sentence quoted absolutely nothing disproving such a supposition. And few will, I think, be disposed to dispute, that cumulative second-hand evidence may in the end become irresistible.

I have also been reminded of Professor Charles Richet's words: "Sometimes indeed, as in the case of Dunglas Home, it has had to be acknowledged that the accusation of fraud was unjustified."<sup>2</sup> I answer: if M. Richet has in his possession evidence refuting Dr. Barthez's testimony, it is to be earnestly hoped that he will communicate it to our Society at once. If he has not, such a sentence has about it nothing decisive.

Again, the late Sir W. F. Barrett (and obviously F. W. H. Myers) failed, I am told, to obtain adequate testimony as to the detection of Home. Now what does this prove? How can such a circumstance affect the Barthez evidence which obviously remained unknown to these two gentlemen? It affects it just as little as the fact of A, B and C *not* having seen a certain act performed by E proves—or may prove—nothing against the evidence of D who *did* see it.

It has also been pointed out that the undoubted fact of D. D. Home having entertained relations with the Empress of the French several years after the exposure, gives us reason to think that the story of the detection may have been a calumny. To all those who know how easily—especially in the domain of spiritualism—persons anxious to believe are apt to forget such unpleasant incidents and indeed all evidence unpalatable to them, this circumstance proves little or nothing.

The following two letters bear on the opinion which the late Empress Eugénie apparently entertained of the Biarritz episode at the end of her life. Both are addressed to myself and are now printed for the first time:

"Dear Sir,

"9th March, 1929.

"I have only to-day had your letter of the 9th of February, which has been following me. Here is the information you ask for: . . .

"This passage<sup>3</sup> was published by me in the *Revue de France* for January 1924. Some time afterwards Dicksonn, who was giving lectures against spiritualism in which he told, *en passant*, the story

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vi. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Miss Dallas, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> An extract from Dr. Barthez's letter of 25th September, 1857, (*Journal*, xv. 287; see also above).

of Home at Biarritz, told me that he had been approached, in the Salle de Géographie on the conclusion of one of his lectures, by M. Morio de l'Isle fils, who confirmed that his father had often told him this anecdote.

"For my part I called, in February, on Prince Roland Bonaparte and took him the passage from the letters of Dr. Barthéz, begging him, since he was soon to see H.M. the Empress Eugénie at Cap Martin, to ask her if these things had really happened as described.

"Some weeks after I again saw the Prince, who told me textually : 'The Empress remembers the things very well and confirms all the details. She no longer remembers who turned up the gas ; but Home was undoubtedly in the scandalous attitude described by Barthéz.' I therefore published this new testimony in my book *Où en est la Métapsychique ?* . . .

"(Signed) PAUL HEUZÉ."<sup>1</sup>

"Sir,

"12. III. 29.

"... I certify that :

"(1) On the 1st of May, 1919, Monsieur G., French Consul, called on me at the Sociétés Savantes with his friend M. Morio, son of the one who exposed Home on the 5th of September, 1857, at Biarritz. M. Morio described to me how his father had unmasked Home.

"(2) On the 7th of November, 1920, Prince Roland Bonaparte came himself to the Société de Géographie, of which he was President, to confirm the authenticity of the Biarritz sitting, which had been several times described to him by the Empress Eugénie.

"The Prince is dead, but his daughter, Princess George of Greece, who was *au courant*, is here to certify the words of her father . . .

"(Signed) Prof. DICKSONN, Cte. de St. Genois."

We are not bound to regard either M. Paul Heuzé as infallible or "Professor" Dicksonn—a conjurer—as absolutely impartial. But the statements by the late Prince Roland Bonaparte they refer to are precise and categorical. We have no right to attribute to them deliberate lying, nor do I see any reason why we should attach to their assertions less importance than to such a passage as appears in my paper of 1912 (*Journal*, xv. 283) : "Mr Feilding having made inquiries, heard from a friend of his in the Empress's *entourage* that Her Majesty had lately expressed, in conversation on the subject, her firm belief in the genuineness of Home's performances, and had

<sup>1</sup> M. Heuzé is a well-known adversary and exposé of fakirs and mediums. He is not however irrevocably hostile (a circumstance to be borne in mind) to *all* supernormal phenomena. [The French text of this letter and of the one following is printed in the Appendix. *Hon. Ed.*]

said that, in her opinion, the stories of a gloved foot under the table were false." I note the apparent discrepancy and pass on.

Here is another testimony on the Biarritz incident. The writer is the late Professor Cyon of the Imperial Medical Academy in Saint Petersburg. The sitting (Home's) to which he refers at the beginning, took place in the presence of some Russian *savants* (also of Aksakov) and was a perfect blank :

"Immediately after the publication of my article on the sitting of 10th March, 1871, General Comte Fleury, one time Ambassador at Petersburg, communicated to me through Dr. Pélikan the details of a sitting at Compiègne where he had succeeded in catching Home in the act. At this sitting were present the Emperor, the Empress, Princess Metternich, and a few other members of the Court. Round the table Home had on his left the Empress Eugénie, on whose left sat Napoleon III. Count Fleury, seated facing Home, was struck by the persistence with which the latter directed the conversation in such a way that the Empress was obliged to turn continually towards the Emperor to put questions to him.

"Suspecting some conjuring trick, General Fleury asked permission to withdraw ; he left by the door at the right of the table, but returned unobserved by another door behind Home. He then saw the latter open the sole of his right shoe, leave his naked foot some time on the marble floor, then suddenly with a rapid and extraordinarily agile movement, touch with his toes the hand of the Empress, who started, crying, ' The hand of a dead child has touched me ! ' General Fleury came forward and described what he had seen. The following day Home was embarked at Calais, conducted by two *agents* ; the order was to keep the incident secret." <sup>1</sup>

Again, I do not by any means regard Professor Cyon as either infallible or impartial. On the contrary. And the inaccuracies are numerous and obvious. But the main facts are the same : (a) the sitting takes place at Napoleon III's Court ; (b) the process of the alleged fraud is more or less identical. That, writing in 1910 or 1909 Professor Cyon should have forgotten many details, written "Compiègne" for "Biarritz" (both imperial residences), etc., the facts having been communicated to him at second-hand nearly forty years before, is surely only natural. To me, however, Dr. Barthez's evidence suffices. I only wish to draw attention to the fact that it is confirmed from several other sources which are absolutely and entirely independent.

Was it at first hand ? We do not know. I incline at first to think not, though his daughter, Mme. Pouquet says (*Journal*, xv. 282) : "He had witnessed it himself." But let us here make what the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. E. Cyon, *Dieu et Science* (Paris 1910), p. 255. [The French text of this extract is printed in the Appendix. *Hon. Ed.*]

Germans call a *Seitensprung* and reason somewhat as follows : X, let us suppose, has great luck at cards, and many people suspect him of cheating. There is a rumour that he was once caught red-handed ; this rumour varies so far as dates and places are concerned, but it is a very persistent one. It does *not* vary—or varies little—as to the *method* of cheating. Investigators try to find its origin but fail. Then suddenly a letter turns up, written by a gentleman, Y, who may or may not have been present himself at the detection, but who certainly had every possibility of learning exactly what had happened. The letter is written at the time of the exposure, in the town where the incident took place, and the fraudulent method therein mentioned is the one which had been rumoured about for so many years. What are we to think ?

The answer is obvious. We may not regard the letter as absolute proof, but to deny that it justifies critics in declaring it very probable that X *was* detected in cheating and in using precisely such and such a method, would, in my opinion, be absurd.

The more so, as—I have often urged this point before—the *modus operandi* alleged to have been used by D. D. Home in September 1857 at Biarritz is over and over again suggested by accounts of his phenomena which we possess. To maintain that the action of D. D. Home's feet could explain everything we read about him, would be absurd. But that it can account for a good deal is an undoubted fact, a fact on which the Biarritz exposure throws an additional if somewhat lurid light.

Let the reader consider, for instance, the following passage from one of Aksakov's works : " Sometimes at Home's sittings (Home's hands being upon the table and a candle burning) I would hold under the table some object ; a pencil, a bell or a handkerchief, and would feel how something began to touch, to take and to pull it ; if I let it go, it would not fall down ; I once put my hand under the table with a ring on one finger in order that it should be taken away, as I hoped thus to know the operating agency better ; all at once tender but firm fingers began to work, trying to take off the ring, in so doing they naturally and inevitably touched my hand and I was fully convinced these were living, warm, thin, human fingers." <sup>1</sup> Professor Boutlerov, who witnessed similar incidents mentions, it is true, in his account first published in the Moscow review *Russky Vestnik*, that Home's feet " were dressed in boots, were controlled and did not move " ; but we are not told whether this " control " was uninterrupted, what it consisted of and whether the boots were not of such a kind that they could be slipped off and put on again with impunity and without difficulty. I may add that I once asked M. Aksakov, who, if I mistake not, was a relation of the second Mme.

<sup>1</sup> *Pravdestniki Spiritisma* [*The Precursors of Spiritism*], p. 485 n.

Home's,<sup>1</sup> "Did you control Home's feet?" To this he replied in the affirmative, but at once added: "And then you surely cannot tie a knot in a handkerchief with your toes." From which I concluded that it was chiefly in the *nature* of the supposed phenomena, not in the *character* of the control that M. Aksakov saw a guarantee of authenticity. Now, that an experienced conjurer—especially one who has chosen to specialise in that way—is able to tie a knot thus, I have no doubt.

To turn to the chief scientific witness to Home's "manifestations," Sir W. Crookes describes (*Proceedings*, vi. 123) a case of "direct" writing (also under the table) which he calls "as striking a manifestation as I have ever seen." In this case again not a word is said about the position of Home's feet: an omission which is certainly unfortunate and strange. Perhaps it will appear less strange to us when we reflect that Sir W. Crookes seems to have been much impressed once by a sitting in which three mediums took part, Home being one of them and Herne and Williams the other two; an episode which surely justifies us in assuming that his canons of evidence in the domain of the physical phenomena may not always have been identical with those of the average psychical researcher of this year of grace 1929—nay, of some years earlier.

*A propos* of the letter, dated 12th April, 1871, mentioning the sitting in question, which will be found in Dr. Fournier d'Albe's *Life of Sir William Crookes* (pp. 191-3),<sup>2</sup> I may be permitted to recall very briefly in passing: (a) that the greatest scientific attainments and achievements are no guarantee that an investigator will prove a competent observer in dealing with phenomena such as those of Home and other mediums; (b) that in our researches the personality and individual capacities and qualifications of such investigators are of far more vital importance than the personality of the medium. For against the latter's supposed attempts at cheating—supposed or indeed very real—we may, in theory at least, adopt precautions which will completely nullify such attempts. As for the investigator, if his name is one of scientific eminence, we are sometimes, in retrospect at least, almost at his mercy. I shall never forget Aksakov's attitude towards the Crookes and Zöllner investigations; it irresistibly reminded me to some extent of a believing Christian's

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted by the way that nothing or hardly anything is said in either of her two books (*D. D. Home, his Life and Mission* and *The Gift of D. D. Home*) about the Biarritz scandal, a circumstance the more worthy of notice as much space is devoted by her to recounting and ridiculing the many often grotesque and absurd rumours and *racontars* circulated about her husband, the very grotesqueness or exaggerated character of which made refutation the more easy. This omission seems, to me, to be of a certain weight in estimating the general character and value of the two books.

<sup>2</sup> The writer's comments on the letter are suggestive and, I think, justified.

attitude towards the Gospel. No doubt our position now is more favourable than that of the generation of fifty or sixty years ago ; yet there is still some room for improvement.

To return to D. D. Home : the Biarritz episode is not the only one in which he may be reasonably suspected to have used fraudulent methods. In our *Journal* for May 1903 (xi. 76-80) a narrative is printed by a Mr. Merrifield (if I mistake not, Mrs. Salter's grandfather) which is unfavourable to the genuineness of Home's " spirit hands." And—a very characteristic detail surely—from a passage of this narrative we are allowed to infer further that at a certain moment the medium's hands were under the table and apparently free : a circumstance which, coupled with not a few statements appearing in other accounts (I have in view particularly Lord Dunraven's very candid and instructive *Experiences in Spiritualism*<sup>1</sup>), throw an ominous light on the conditions of control which seem to have prevailed often enough, very possibly as a general rule, at D. D. Home's sittings.

These *Experiences* in particular prove to us quite conclusively, it seems to me, that it was virtually Home who controlled and directed the sittings ; and that precautions against fraud were either practically non-existent or obviously inadequate. Omissions appear in the accounts which prove that the observers had no idea of the conditions required to make an experiment even relatively convincing. Home was practically at liberty to act as he liked, moving freely about the room and even leaving the room<sup>2</sup>. To absolutely non-evidential (if not absurd<sup>3</sup>) trance addresses the eye-witnesses obviously attached—judging by the care with which they reproduced these addresses almost verbatim—the same importance as to conclusive phenomena. And in some few cases we may indeed infer quite legitimately that Home could have introduced a confederate into the *séance*-room without much difficulty. In saying this I have particularly in view the sitting of 9th February, 1869 (*Experiences*, p. 173) ; and surely it is significant that in Lord Adare's (Dunraven's) account, whilst not a word is said as to how the supposed materialised form disappeared, we have plenty of details as to absolutely non-evidential talks held at the sitting.

It may not unreasonably be asked whether the medium's eloquence did not play here, so to say, the part of a smoke-screen to cover the materialised spirit's retreat.

Here are a few extracts which enable us, I think, to form an

<sup>1</sup> My references are to the S.P.R. reprint in *Proceedings* (1925) xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular *Experiences*, p. 166 and p. 167, footnote, from which it follows that on a certain occasion Home may have left the room twice in connection with a single " experiment " ! Here a slight doubt seems to have entered even Lord Dunraven's mind.

<sup>3</sup> *Experiences*, pp. 144, 158, 245.



adequate idea of the conditions of control prevailing as a general rule at least at the Dunraven sittings. In the account of the 62nd sitting of 12th March, 1869, we read (*Experiences*, pp. 221-222) :

"He [Home] got up, and acting under an uncontrollable impulse, walked about the room, his hands and arms being strangely waved about and agitated ; he made mesmeric passes over us all . . . He made passes for some time over my father's forehead, the back of his head, and behind his ears, occasionally going to the table at which we had previously been seated, and extending his fingers over it as though withdrawing some influence from it. While walking about he suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence with a violent gasp, and sinking on his knees went into a trance. He got up, walked about, apparently conversing with someone, and then, taking each of us in turn by the hand, led us to the other table, placed chairs for us, and signed to us to sit down. My father requested me to bring paper and a pencil ; but Home shook his head, and afterwards brought them himself. He then commenced arranging the furniture in the most minute detail, consulting apparently all the time with someone. He placed the small round table near us and behind my father, and moved a chair up to it ; he altered the position of several of the chairs in different parts of the room, placed the miniature portrait of his wife on the small round table, and the case containing little Dannie Cox's photograph on the large table behind me, then going to the bookcase he took out several books, looked into them and replaced them ; at length he appeared to find what he wanted, for he took out a volume, folded his hands across it on his breast, and after standing for a few seconds in a most reverential attitude, sank down upon his knees and appeared to pray earnestly ; then rising to his full height he held the book as high as he could above his head and placed it upon our table."

Here is an extract from the account of the 68th sitting, 10th April, 1869 (*Experiences*, pp. 249-250) :

"Home got up, took a striped rug off the sofa, and covering his shoulders, head, and face with it, began walking about the room in a stealthy manner, hiding behind the furniture, and crawling about flat upon the ground, apparently lying in wait for some one. Suddenly he put his hand upon the candle, and left us in almost total darkness. I could just distinguish him gliding about the room, and crawling on the floor."

Imagine the results a conjurer could achieve when operating under such conditions ! Now it is needless to say that from the critical and scientific standpoint we are bound to regard D. D. Home as having very possibly been a tolerably good conjurer ; indeed we have no right to regard him in a different light.

The following extract from Lord Adare's *Experiences* bears not

so much on the conditions of control as on the degree of critical acumen displayed by the sitters. At the sitting of 6th March, 1869, already mentioned (*Experiences*, p. 209) :

"He [Home] placed chairs for us all, drew over a little table, and sat down. It was pitch dark. Immediately a hand was laid on the back of my head. He said 'They will touch you with flowers.' Both Mrs. Wynne and I felt them. He said to Mrs. Wynne, 'It was John who touched you.' We heard at a little distance the sound of flowers being stirred and broken, and immediately some were placed in our hands. Mr. Home said, 'Take Daniel's hands, dear Emily, we want you to be able to tell others that you held his hands and felt his feet.' While Mr. Home's hands and feet were thus in contact with Mrs. Wynne's we all simultaneously felt flowers waved across our faces, heads, and hands."

From which it seems to follow that the writer (Lord Adare's father) was inclined to regard as supernormal phenomena occurrences taking place in the dark and when the medium's hands were free. Needless to say, the mere fact of the latter having been later in contact with Mrs. Wynne's hands affords us but an inadequate guarantee of genuineness.

At another moment in the same sitting, a flower pot with cyclamens having been put under the table, and raps having been heard, Lord Adare's father reports the phenomena thus: (*Experiences*, pp. 207-208) : "I said to [Major] Blackburn : 'Get under the table and hold Mr. Home's feet.' He did so, and we heard the raps distinctly over his head. Mr. Home suddenly said 'Oh, look at the hand near me holding a flower !' Twice he said that he saw the hand. I, somehow instinctively, put my hand under the table, and immediately felt a flower placed very gently in it. The following was then given : 'The flower is from Augusta, with fond love.'"

Now surely the crux of the whole matter is, in the present instance, whether Home's feet were held *at the moment* the flower was placed in the hand of Lord Adare's father. But as to this all-important circumstance we are told nothing. Let us however be fair and note that there is some evidence of a critical attitude at times. Thus Lord Dunraven tells us in his account of Sitting No. 76, 25th June, 1869, that having had the opportunity a few days before of seeing Miss C— R— write "under supposed spirit influence," he "obtained permission to put a few questions. Among them I asked, 'What do you think of Mr. Home ?' Miss R— wrote instantly, 'He has a certain degree of power, but a vast amount of trickery.' In answer to another question was written, 'He [Home] deceives people by pretending that he can call up the spirits of their friends, etc.' These and other answers made me think that this was probably a deceitful spirit" (*Experiences*, p. 270).

So Lord Dunraven *did* show some scepticism at times. But this scepticism appears to have been chiefly directed against those who doubted Home's powers, even when such suggestions of doubt came from what was to him the dark Beyond.

The following extract is, I think, particularly significant. At Sitting No. 27 (no date, but clearly in October 1868) we are told, (*Experiences*, p. 128) :

"Home then fetched the lamp back. We heard a knocking at the door, he opened it and appeared to invite some one to come in, but did not succeed ; he shut the door, when the knocking recommenced he opened it again, but was unsuccessful ; this was repeated three or four times, at last he went and gathering some ferns and flowers from off the coffin opened the door and held them out ; still it was in vain, the knocking again occurred at the door, and this time he took little Ada and led her to the door, when he appeared to succeed in inducing the person to come in. He said, 'It is —' (a little servant girl who had died two days previously)."

Why have I called this extract particularly significant ? Because it seems to show that, at times at least, Home would have been able to admit an accomplice into the room if he had chosen to do so. The number of sittings where we have to suppose that such an introduction *must* have taken place, if we want to explain the phenomena in a natural way, is indeed exceedingly small, but, as I have pointed out already, there *are* such sittings. In the account I have just quoted no particularly sensational incident occurs after Home's movements, openings of the door, etc. But it is, I think, an essential part of a fraudulent medium's equipment that his sitters should get accustomed to view without suspicion certain gestures which may ultimately play an important part in producing the phenomena. In order to allay suspicions nothing of any importance will follow such gestures or movements at first or indeed in most cases. It is therefore conceivable that the sitters will attach to them no significance and therefore will end by omitting them from their accounts ; and indeed this may have happened in connection with the sitting of 9th February, 1869, though another explanation is also possible : that the accomplice may have been hidden in the room.

Now there is every reason to suppose that the 78 Dunraven sittings<sup>1</sup> were not different in quality from Home's other sittings. We may therefore legitimately infer that in the accounts we possess of some of the latter (not excepting the Crookes evidence) there are

<sup>1</sup> Among them we have the famous sitting of 13th December, 1868 (Home being levitated out of one window of Ashley House, Victoria Street, and carried into another). This occurrence, says the then Master of Lindsay, later Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, one of the sitters, took place with the moon "shining full into the room." As a matter of fact the new moon could not then light the room, however faintly (*Experiences*, p. 152, footnote).

omissions, perhaps not unimportant ones, likely to afford us a natural clue to episodes apparently inexplicable. In the numerous involuntary indications Lord Dunraven's candid account gives us in this respect lies in my opinion the chief value of the *Experiences in Spiritualism with D. D. Home*.

To return to Sir William Crookes's experiences: when he published for the first time his accounts of investigations in the phenomena of Spiritualism (I refer chiefly, but not exclusively, to his first papers in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* for 1871) the reader was certainly entitled to conclude from his descriptions that these investigations were scientific experiments occurring in fairly good light and under conditions reminding us more or less of those which prevail in a laboratory. This was, so to say, a first phase.

But in 1889 the "Notes on séances with D. D. Home" published in *Proceedings* presented us with a somewhat different picture. The supposedly carefully planned experiments proved chiefly—though perhaps not exclusively—to have been incidents in spiritualistic sittings selected out of a more or less long series. From various passages it was obvious that these sittings were not very different in character—except perhaps for the personality of some of the sitters and at times for the intensity of the phenomena—from many ordinary ones. This was, so to say, phase number two.

Already at this stage it was becoming obvious that in order to attach a decisive importance to observations occurring under such conditions psychical researchers must needs throw overboard a canon of evidence imposed on them but a little time previously with much insistence and against not a little opposition. Indeed if—as some of our most eminent members were inclined to conclude from such experiments as those of S. J. Davey—no paramount importance can be attached to observations made in full light and under apparently very simple conditions (I have in view Eglinton's slate-writing) but conditions not excluding the necessity for "continuous observation," what were we to think of the evidential cogency of supposedly supernormal occurrences sometimes of a rather complicated character taking place in poor light and often unexpectedly, such as Sir William Crookes briefly described? The conditions for continuous observations seemed here still more unfavourable than at the Eglinton sittings.<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that the *Adare Experiences in Spiritualism* bring us one step further. We seem to have entered on a third stage.

<sup>1</sup> Personally, it is true, I have never attached decisive importance to the negative argument derived from continuous observation. Why? Because to me it is the personality of the witness or observer which is the paramount factor, all the rest being of subsidiary importance. But I am speaking here from the standpoint of the psychical researcher of the Hodgsonian type—in the physical phenomena, not in the Piper sphere.

They present us with regard to the Home sittings and to Home's behaviour at these sittings with a picture to which Sir W. Crookes's accounts had not accustomed us. Various actions of the medium's are described as to which the great scientist's notes seem to be much more reticent. What are we to conclude? Seeing as I have already said that there is not the slightest reason to think that the Adare sittings were different in quality and in character from other Home sittings, we are justified in thinking that if Sir William Crookes's notes had been as full as Lord Adare's we should have found in them, now and then, indications suggesting a possible natural explanation of occurrences which as described seem to exclude it. This is only a hypothesis, but a hypothesis based, it seems to me, on data not to be lightly set aside.

Here is another negative testimony bearing on Home, and a particularly significant one, because coming from Baron du Potet, the celebrated French mesmerist. He writes (I quote from the *Revue Métapsychique* of September-October 1927, p. 390):

"There is something mysterious to investigate, and it is only with circumspection that we must admit the avowed and advocated cause of all the strange phenomena produced by Mr. Home. In any case our feeling is that there is a mixture, that all is not always independent of the medium himself and that one day we shall be astonished to learn that the psychic force was not alone at the service of Mr. Home. But is it I who dare to-day write these words of distrust, I who have praised and extolled this extraordinary medium, I the spiritualist? Why not, if doubt has entered my mind?"<sup>1</sup>

Du Potet had therefore doubts—very possibly very grave ones—as to the genuineness of some of Home's performances. He expresses them in somewhat Delphian language, and gives no details. How many of the great medium's clients and friends, it may be asked, may have felt the same suspicions and under strong pressure have been prevented from uttering them? *Chi lo sa?*

These two instances—Mr Merrifield's and Baron du Potet's—show us that, even apart from the Barthez evidence, we have testimony tending to disprove the legend as to Home's immunity from detection. In any case there are in his career several suspicious incidents. And there is besides this most sinister similarity between the substance of the Biarritz detection and the character of a great many phenomena which have been recorded of him.

I pass on to another aspect of the subject, and I think, a very important one: the late Mr. Podmore has been accused in our publications—and possibly elsewhere—of making insinuations against the honesty of Stainton Moses and also of Home (*Journal*, xxi. 140). Against such accusations I feel bound to protest emphati-

<sup>1</sup> [The French text of this quotation is printed in the Appendix. *Hon. Ed.*]

cally. D. D. Home seems to have led, on the whole, a very pleasant and attractive life, moving in the "best" society (not precisely a very competent judge in such matters as psychical research as a general rule, I am afraid) sitting to-day with Napoleon III of France, to-morrow with Alexander II of Russia,<sup>1</sup> having the satisfaction of his phenomena being endorsed by one of the first scientists of the century. He is supposed never to have been *paid* in the proper sense of the word, but he most undoubtedly derived from his sittings and from the glamour emanating from them very substantial and useful material advantages. As a general rule the conditions under which these sittings took place were such that, judging at least by what Lord Adare tells us, in nineteen cases out of twenty, it was a question not of Home being prevented from cheating, but of his being unwilling to deceive. The "manifestations," if of no fraudulent origin, were most obviously inexplicable by known natural laws. It does not by any means follow necessarily from this circumstance alone that they were of a spurious character; and I for my part do not propose to reject any really well attested evidence in, I think, almost any domain on purely *a priori* grounds. But—and this is with me a crucial point—so long as the authenticity of the alleged phenomena has not been proved beyond doubt, we are perfectly and absolutely justified in regarding the good faith of the supposed medium or clairvoyant, or whatever else, as open to suspicion. This, quite independently from the "social position" (a rather elusive conception) of this clairvoyant or medium, and whether his name be D. D. Home, Rev. Stainton Moses, Chamberlain X, or any other. To me this is, I confess, an axiom so self evident that I am almost formulating it with a certain *gêne*.

This self-evident truth amply justifies us in casting a shadow—the shadow of a doubt—upon Home's memory and career, without taking much into account in what society he moved, whose friendship he enjoyed and in what drawing-rooms he was lionised.

Two more remarks. *Primo*: we are often told that the physical phenomena of Spiritualism are produced, on the spirit hypothesis, by an inferior class of entities, to whom we cannot look either for high moral teaching or for proofs of identity.<sup>2</sup> But with Home, on the contrary, the phenomena have a distinctly spiritualistic character; they are originated by the "spirits" of the sitters' deceased relations, if not invariably at least often; identity tests seem also to be given at times. Surely it is a significant fact that this deviation

<sup>1</sup> One of whose A.D.C. Generals was my maternal grandfather. He believed Home to have authentic power, but to cheat occasionally. Mrs. Salter has seen a translation of part of a letter received lately by me from my grandfather's daughter and bearing on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> I know of course that there are exceptions to this generalisation. But broadly speaking such a statement has become almost a truism.

from what we were entitled to consider a "law" occurred in the case of a privileged medium, a *rarissima avis*—who enjoyed an unique opportunity in having access to various sources of information concerning his clients' private affairs and family matters. For it is obvious that many of these clients looked on Home as *un des leurs*, as one of their number, and had every confidence in him. By calling attention to this curious fact, I do not necessarily imply that its explanation *must* be of a sinister character; but if not so, it seems to be one more instance of that diversity of "laws"—real or alleged—in the domain of spiritualism, and in particular of physical spiritualism, which we are well entitled to regard as somewhat disconcerting.

*Secundo*: Were I asked which of Home's phenomena seem to me nevertheless particularly unlikely to have been due to trickery and cheating, I would answer, I think, that some of his performances with burning coals, especially such a case as Mr. S. C. Hall's (*Experiences*, pp. 280-282), would appear to me to exceed the limits of conjuring (but not of a peculiar form of suggestion perhaps); and in this connection I would add that the most conclusive evidence collected by the S.P.R. as to physical phenomena is possibly that which deals with alleged facts of a similar character (such as the Fire-walk). It is not inconceivable, some will think, that in this similarity there may be something more than a mere chance coincidence.

Before finishing I wish to remark that, so far as I have ascertained, some people are even now somewhat "touchy" when doubts are expressed as to the moral character of D. D. Home. Such people will permit me respectfully to remind them that the celebrated medium belongs to history. And that to matters historical that Latin saying (a saying, it seems to me, of somewhat doubtful wisdom): *De mortuis nil nisi bene* cannot, by any means apply. Otherwise there would be no history!

I also wish to say in conclusion a few words explanatory of a passage of my paper which is likely perhaps to be misunderstood. I said above that if the investigator's "name is one of scientific eminence we are sometimes, in retrospect at least, almost at his mercy." This sentence must not be interpreted as implying hostility towards *savants* on my part. Believing as I do Science to be the greatest benefactress of mankind, how could I view those who represent it otherwise than with feelings of the greatest respect, and often of the greatest gratitude? But from this to the infallibility of *savants* there is a long way. From this to asserting that a scientist cannot be, in the sphere with which we are here dealing, an inadequate observer<sup>1</sup> there is also a long way. Nor am I, I confess, altogether

<sup>1</sup> The late Professor N. Wagner of the University of St. Petersburg, one of the pioneers of spiritism in Russia and a Corresponding Member of the S.P.R.,

convinced that even a prince of Science will always be ready publicly to admit that he made a mistake—that he has been in fact deceived—however easy it has always seemed to me to recognise one's mistakes. Nor do I think a man of science, whatever name he bears, is justified in omitting to describe in detail what precautions he took against fraud in his researches ; and by the way, in so speaking I am merely repeating what Mrs. Sidgwick said in 1886 in a paper on the physical phenomena of spiritualism in our *Proceedings* (iv. 65), specially mentioning by name in this connection Sir William Crookes and Professor Zöllner. I do not think it improbable that the explanation of part of the halo which still surrounds D. D. Home's name in the domain of so-called *scientific* investigation of his phenomena is to be sought somewhere in this direction ; and coupled with the undoubtedly suspicious incidents and circumstances spoken of above, the whole seems to me to detract a good deal from the reputation of the greatest of known physical mediums. I do not feel justified in asserting more ; but so much can, I think, be asserted safely.

*Note which Sir Oliver Lodge wishes appended to the foregoing Paper, as an additional caution to new members :*

Although I had no first-hand experience of Home's phenomena, other evidence has convinced me that psycho-physical phenomena are possible, and I would remind readers that there is abundant testimony in favour of the production of such phenomena by Home. Count Perovsky's Paper aims at being a fair presentation of the testimony in a contrary direction. It does not claim to settle the matter, as by a judicial decision.

## APPENDIX.

### THE FRENCH TEXTS OF EXTRACTS TRANSLATED IN THE FOREGOING PAPER.

*Extract from Dr Barthez's letter dated 25th September, 1857.*

... Je te dirai pour t'amuser qu'on a fini par saisir l'un des procédés au moyen desquels M. Hume évoque les esprits. L'Impératrice en est réduite à dire que le Hume d'aujourd'hui n'est plus

is a case to the point. His credulity was bewildering. Aksakov was not a hypercritical observer or writer, yet I shall never forget with what indignation he spoke to me once of a report of Professor Wagner's (a very distinguished entomologist by the way) on some "experiments" with a Russian physical medium called Nikolaev.



le Hume d'autrefois, qu'il a perdu son pouvoir, et qu'il cherche à le remplacer par des subterfuges. La chose est fort simple. M. Hume a des souliers fins, facile à ôter et à remettre ; il a aussi, je crois, des bas coupés qui laissent les doigts libres. Au moment voulu il ôte un de ses souliers, et avec son pied tire une robe par-ci, une robe par-là, fait tinter une sonnette, cogne d'un côté ou d'un autre, et la chose une fois faite remet prestement sa chaussure. Cela a été vu par M. Morio qui en a fait une belle relation écrite et signée avec tous les détails nécessaires pour établir l'authenticité de sa découverte. Hume a vu qu'on devinait son affaire et il faisait, je t'assure, piteuse figure . . . Du coup les séances d'évocation des esprits ont cessé au château et nous espérons cet indigne charlatan est démonétisé. Cependant Sa Majesté ne peut pas digérer qu'un homme ait eu le front de se moquer à ce point d'elle et de l'Empereur pendant une année.

*Extract from M. Paul Heuzé's letter dated 9th March, 1929.*

Je lis aujourd'hui seulement votre lettre du 9 février, qui m'a couru après. Voici les renseignements que vous me demandez :

. . . Ce passage fut publié par mes soins dans la *Revue de France* de janvier 1924. Quelque temps après Dicksonn, qui faisait des conférences contre le spiritisme et qui racontait, en passant, l'histoire de Home à Biarritz, me dit avoir reçu la visite, à la Salle de Géographie, à l'issue d'une de ses conférences, de M. Morio de l'Isle  *fils*, qui lui confirma que son père lui avait souvent raconté cette anecdote.

De mon côté, en février, j'allai trouver le Prince Roland Bonaparte et lui portai le passage des lettres du Dr Barthez, en le priant, puisqu'il devait voir bientôt S.M. l'Impératrice Eugénie, au Cap Martin, de lui demander si décidément les choses s'étaient bien passées ainsi. Quelques semaines après, je revis le prince, qui me dit textuellement : " L'Impératrice se rappelle fort bien l'aventure et m'en a confirmé tous les détails. Elle ne se rappelle plus  *qui* avait tourné le robinet du bec de gaz ; mais Home était bien dans l'attitude scandaleuse que décrit Barthez." J'ai donc apporté ce nouveau témoignage dans mon livre *Où en est la Métapsychique* . . . ?

(Signed) PAUL HEUZÉ.

*Extract from M. Dicksonn's letter dated 12th March, 1929.*

Paul Heuzé est mon disciple depuis 1921, époque à laquelle il est entré dans la lutte, et je lui ai fourni tous les éléments pour se documenter.

Les spirites sont, comme toujours, de mauvaise foi, heureusement qu'il y a des preuves.

Je certifie que :

1°. Le 1er mai 1919 Monsieur G., Consul de France, m'a rendu visite aux Sociétés Savantes avec son ami M. Morio, fils de celui qui a surpris Home le 5 7re 1857 à Biarritz, et celui-ci m'a raconté comment son père a démasqué Home.

2°. Le 7 9re 1920 le Prince Roland Bonaparte tint à venir lui-même à la Société de Géographie dont il était Président, pour me confirmer l'authenticité de la séance de Biarritz que lui avait raconté plusieurs fois l'Impératrice Eugénie.

Le Prince est mort, mais sa fille la Princesse Georges de Grèce qui était au courant est là pour certifier les paroles de son père.

Ces deux témoignages réduisent à néant les démentis intéressés des spirites.

Voilà, Monsieur, ce que je peux vous déclarer et vous autoriser à crier bien haut en mon nom.

Depuis 17 ans je mène une campagne acharnée contre les exploiters de la crédulité publique et suis heureux d'avoir fait des adeptes.

...

(Signed) Professor DICKSONN, Comte de St. Genois.

*Statement by Baron du Potet printed in the Revue Métapsychique (September-October 1927), p. 390.*

Il y a quelque chose de mystérieux à approfondir et ce n'est qu'avec circonspection que l'on doit admettre la cause avouée et soutenue de tous les phénomènes étranges produits par M. Home. Dans tous les cas, notre sentiment est qu'il y a mélange, que tout n'est pas toujours indépendant de lui-même, et qu'un jour on sera étonné d'apprendre que la force psychique n'était pas seule au service de M. Home. Mais est-ce moi qui ose aujourd'hui écrire ces paroles de méfiance, moi qui ai loué et prôné ce médium extraordinaire, moi le spiritualiste ? *Pourquoi pas, si le doute est entré dans mon esprit ?*

*Extract from Dr E. Cyon, Dieu et Science (Paris 1910), p. 255.*

Aussitôt après la publication de mon article sur la séance du 10 mars 1871, le Général Comte Fleury, ancien ambassadeur à Pétersbourg, me fit communiquer par le Dr Pélikan les détails d'une séance à Compiègne où il avait réussi à prendre Home sur le fait. A cette séance assistaient l'Empereur, l'Impératrice, la Princesse Metternich et quelques autres intimes de la cour. Autour de la table Home avait à sa gauche l'Impératrice Eugénie et à gauche de celle-ci se trouvait Napoléon III. Le Comte Fleury assis en face de Home fut frappé de l'insistance avec laquelle ce dernier dirigeait la conversation de manière à ce que l'Impératrice fut obligée de rester continuellement tournée vers l'Empereur, pour lui poser des questions.

Soupçonnant quelque tour de passe-passe, le Général Fleury demanda permission de se retirer ; il sortit par la porte située à droite de la table, mais il rentra inaperçu par une autre porte qui se trouvait derrière Home. Il vit alors celui-ci entr'ouvrir la semelle de sa bottine droite, laisser quelque temps son pied nu sur le marbre du sol, puis subitement par un mouvement rapide et d'une agilité extraordinaire, toucher avec ses doigts de pied la main de l'Impératrice qui sursauta en criant : " La main d'un enfant mort vient de me toucher ! " Le Général Fleury s'avancant alors, dévoila ce qu'il avait vu. Le lendemain Home fut embarqué à Calais, sous la conduite de deux agents : la consigne était de tenir l'incident secret.